

§ 656.3

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§ 656.3 Policy.

Section 126(d) of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1978 declares that special effort should be made to promote commuter modes of transportation which conserve energy, reduce pollution, and reduce traffic congestion.

§ 656.5 Eligibility.

(a) Projects which promote ride-sharing programs need not be located on but must serve a Federal-aid system to be eligible for Federal-aid primary, secondary, or urban system funds depending on the system served. The Federal share payable will be in accordance with the provisions of 23 U.S.C. 120. Except for paragraph (c)(3) of this section, for all purposes of this regulation the term *carpool* includes *vanpool*.

(b) Projects shall not be approved under this regulation if they will have an adverse effect on any mass transportation system.

(c) The following types of projects and work are considered eligible under this program:

(1) Systems, whether manual or computerized, for locating potential participants in carpools and informing them of the opportunities for participation. Eligible costs for such systems may include costs of use or rental of computer hardware, costs of software, and installation costs (including both labor and other related items).

(2) Specialized procedures to provide carpooling opportunities to elderly or handicapped persons.

(3) The costs of acquiring vanpool vehicles and actual financial losses that occur when the operation of any vanpool is aborted before the scheduled termination date for the reason, concurred in by the State, that its continuation is no longer productive. The cost of acquiring a vanpool vehicle is eligible under the following conditions:

(i) The vanpool vehicle is a four-wheeled vehicle manufactured for use on public highways for transportation of 7–15 passengers (no passenger cars which do not meet the 7–15 criteria and no buses); and

(ii) Provision is made for repayment of the acquisition cost to the project within the passenger-service life of the vehicle. Repayment may be accom-

plished through the charging of a reasonable user fee based on an estimated number of riders per vehicle and the cost of reasonable vehicle depreciation, operation, and maintenance. Repayment is not required under the following conditions:

(A) When vehicles are purchased as demonstrator vans for use as a marketing device. Vehicles procured for this purpose should be used to promote the vanpool concept among employees, employers, and other groups by allowing potential riders and sponsors to examine commuter vans; or

(B) When vehicles are purchased for use on a trial commuting basis to enable people to experience vanpooling first hand. The trial period must be limited to a maximum of 2 months. That part of the user fee normally collected to cover the capital or ownership cost of the van would be eligible for reimbursement as a promotional cost during the limited trial period. As with established vanpool service, all vehicle operating costs must be borne by the user(s) during the trial period.

(4) Work necessary to designate existing highway lanes as preferential carpool lanes or bus and carpool lanes. Eligible work may include preliminary engineering to determine traffic flow and design criteria, signing, pavement markings, traffic control devices, and minor physical modifications to permit the use of designated lanes as preferential carpool lanes or bus and carpool lanes. Such improvements on any public road may be approved if such projects facilitate more efficient use of any Federal-aid highway. Eligible costs may also include costs of initial inspection or monitoring of use, including special equipment, to ensure that the high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes designation is effective and that the project is fully developed and operating properly. While no fixed time limit is being arbitrarily prescribed for the inspection and monitoring period, it is intended that this activity be conducted as soon as possible to evaluate the effectiveness of the project and does not extend indefinitely nor become a part of routine facility operations.